THE

CHRISTIAN IDEA OF SACRIFICE.

A

DISCOURSE

PREACHED AT THE DEDICATION OF

THE CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH,

MONTREAL,

ON SUNDAY, 12TH SEPTEMBER, 1858.

BY

REV. JOHN CORDNER.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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HENRY ROSE, ST. FRANCOIS XAVIER STREET.

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NOTE.

On Sunday 12th Sept. 1858, the new and enlarged Church built by the Montreal Unitarian Congregation was opened and set apart for the purposes of Public Worship. It is erected on the site of the former Church, which was built by the same worshipping Society, and dedicated in 1845. The foundation walls of the former building to the full extent of their length, and to the height of the flooring above the basement room, have been used in the present one; and additions made at either end. The enlargement of the building and the character of the ground demanded an entire change of architectural style. The former edifice was of the Grecian order.

At the opening service and Dedication of the present Church, the Rev. Mr. Cordner was assisted by the Rev. Dr. Gannett, of Boston, and the Rev. Mr. Frothingham, of Portland.

Montreal, October, 1858.

THE

CHRISTIAN IDEA OF SACRIFICE.

HEB. x.1—8, 9. "The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect.

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He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein, which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will O God, He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second."

We meet this morning, my friends, within the walls of a renewed—I may say of a new—temple. Two summers have passed since the walls of the former building were dismantled and removed to make way for the larger one which we now occupy. As the result of some sacrifice,

and not a little exertion on your part, this fair and enlarged house of worship stands here to-day looking down on the busy city below, as our former one did during the thirteen years of its existence. In opening it now for the sacred purposes of its erection, as a home and an altar for our common worship as Christian disciples, and while the prayer and hymn of dedication are yet fresh in our hearts, and sounding in our ears, I would invite you to consider briefly with me a topic which immediately touches, and directly involves the essence of Christian worship. If we would make the glory of this our second temple transcend that of the first, we must look farther and deeper than any outward ritual or material adornment — we must duly consider, and rightly appreciate, and reverently render, that inward and spiritual service to which we are called by Christianity, and which it is the special glory of the Gospel to promote and extend among men. The Jew had only one temple in which the acceptable worship of a proper sacrifice could be rendered. The Lord Christ broke down this peculiarity by the announcement that the Father could be worshipped every where. In the light of the Gospel it became clear that outward sacrifices were of no more avail. Yet the Christian worship has its own proper sacrifice. If Christ annulled the outward, it was that he might set forth the inward. If he took away the one, it was that he might establish the other. Taking the passage of Scripture just cited, then, as a text, let me ask your attention to some remarks on the *Christian Idea of Sacrifice*.

The religious sentiment in man has always manifested itself in acts of sacrifice. Go where we will, and as far

back as we will in the history of our race, we find sacrifice in some form. The most ancient Indian and Egyptian, the Greek and Roman of classic history, the Scandinavian of Northern Europe, and the Aztec of Southern America — the representatives of all forms of civilization and barbarism, have expressed their worship more or less in this way. Men every where, and in all conditions of their earthly existence, were prompted by an instinct of their nature which they could not resist, to look out of themselves to some other and higher Power. Amid the magnitude and mystery and bounty of the outward world their feelings of awe and wonder and gratitude were excited, and through conscience, also, they were awakened to a sense of weakness and want within. This led them to look out of themselves, and seek a connection with some being whereby they might be helped and strengthened, and through which they might receive some rest and satisfaction. Hence came worship in its varied methods and manifestations.

The character of a people's worship would depend, of course, on their conception of its object. A stern and cruel deity would be served by stern and cruel rites. A God of a more mild and merciful cast would have a corresponding service. In their acts of sacrifice they would be ruled by their predominating idea, and as they regarded their posture toward the deity as one of connection or of alienation, so would their sacrifice be one of gratitude and praise, or one of penitence and propitiation — a thank-offering, or a sin-offering. You will observe that I refer the custom of sacrifice to a natural origin. In opposition to this view many persons maintain that it was from the first a divine institution — *i. e.*, an insti-

tution specially commanded by God. I can see no reason why we should affirm or believe such a thing, for certainly we have no record of any such command in the Bible. The first mention we have of sacrifice is to be found in the offering of Cain and Abel, but there is no divine command set forth in connection with them. The Scripture simply informs us that "Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof." (Gen. iv. 2, 3, 4.) Each man brought of his store, such as it was, and offered it to the Lord. They acknowledged an unseen God not only as their own Creator, but as the source, likewise, of all that the earth did yield and the flock bring forth. And, prompted by gratitude and reverence, they gave a visible token of that acknowledgment by the outward offering taken from their fields and flocks.

If we can find in the nature of the case an adequate explanation of the origin of sacrifice we are not called on — the accepted rules of investigation rather forbid us — to seek any other. The custom fell into fearful and most hideous abuse, as when human beings were made victims, and even parents offered their children. The fact that human sacrifices have been almost, if not quite universally, prevalent among the various tribes and nations of the earth, stands as a sad commentary on the natural and unguided proclivities of the human race. Deep in the recesses of the forest the Druid slew his victims. High up on the pyramid, and upon a block of jaspar the Aztec priest officiated at his horrid rites. In the rude ritual of

the ancient Canaanites the cry of burning children was lost to hearing in the savage din of drums and trumpets. In such sacrifices we see the most awful and revolting perversion of the religious sentiment which the history of man affords. An abuse so shocking and unnatural could exist only among people where right ideas of God had faded away, and the prevailing deity had become the reflected image of some of the worst human passions. It must have come from the feeling of alienation. They felt that their God stood wrathfully apart from them, and such hideous sacrifices were designed to propitiate him. This feeling of alienation is natural to man. His conscience tells him how far he falls short of—how much he sins against — his ideal excellence. His own moral nature is offended, and surely so likewise must his God be offended. No victim short of the most precious, or that which will fully represent what is most precious, is adequate to express his regret for the separation, and the most precious is offered. The child is given by the parent, in some cases the monarch is taken from the throne, for the sacrifice. The captive taken in war is brought to the altar, and through the sacrifice of that human life, as representing that which is most precious upon earth, the worshipper seeks to placate his God. The sacrifices are offered — will the God accept them, and be appeased and conciliated? In some such way do I satisfy myself concerning the origin of such fearful abuse of sacrifice.

The abuse here, following the general law in such things, came from the use. Nothing is clearer in human experience than the sense of sin. And this sense of sin brings with it the sense of separation from God. The soul awakened to a consciousness of this separation feels

ill at ease. Life becomes darkened, and the universe a hopeless puzzle. The man feels that reconciliation with his God is needful to the adjustment and satisfaction of his moral nature. The sin is confessed, and the sacrifice offered as an outward and emphatic symbol of the feeling within. Will God accept the offering, forgive the sin, and relieve the soul? This seems to be the simple and natural theory of the sin offering. Scarcely any subject connected with religion has been more confused, and complicated by theological discussion, than this one of sacrifice. The amount of learning, ingenuity and patience that has been expended upon it has been immense, and, as it seems to me, mainly to the darkening of counsel. Whatever may be the interest of such discussions to the student of opinion, to the simple religious soul they bring but little profit. With respect, again, to the thank offerings, or sacrifices of thanksgiving, what can be more natural and fit than they? Man finds himself in a world of mystery, beauty and bounty. Sky above him, and earth beneath minister to his enjoyment. He feels himself dependent, and in his best and most deeply meditative hours his soul dilates with gratitude to the source of such varied gifts and mercies. He is thankful, profoundly thankful, and he takes of what he has received and makes a visible offering which symbolises the state of his mind and heart.

In the Mosaic economy of religion we find the practice of sacrifice recognized and divinely regulated. Among the Hebrews prior to the giving of the law it was not reduced to any special system. Every man might offer his own sacrifice, though it was generally confided to some person of greater distinction — the head of the family or

the like. But under Moses we find it organized into a divine institution, the various kinds of offerings being minutely specified, and an order of men appointed to take charge of them on behalf of God, and mediate between Jehovah and his people. The sacrifice was the central point of the ritual of the Hebrews. For it the priesthood and temple existed, and were sustained. The central point of a ritual divinely instituted, we are authorized in looking to it for some special symbolic meaning, and seek in its temporary and limited form, a substance permanent and universal.

Theologians quite commonly tell us that the whole ritual of the Hebrews pointed to the Gospel, and that the high sacrifice thereof typified that of the Lord Christ. I accept the statement in its broadest and deepest meaning, without pledging myself to verbal and specific details. All sacrifice I regard as symbolical of the proper Christian sacrifice, which is *the destruction of self-will, to the end that the will of God may take its place, and rule supreme in the soul*. This is the substance of all proper sacrifice, and it was shown forth in a dim and imperfect way by the sacrifices of the Mosaic law. Therein it appeared in and by "a shadow." But in Christ the substance took form — actual and perfect form. In him it became embodied in a living and visible person, and was thus projected into the field of human history. For high and providential purposes it was thus presented — a complete representation — "the very image" of the proper sacrifice required of man, and through which he is to be made perfect. Christ was the end of the Mosaic law. In his death on Calvary the Hebrew ritual was brought to a close. This

was the announcement that thenceforth the character of the sacrifice was to be changed. It was to assume grander proportions, and to touch man at every point of his most hidden life and being. Through centuries of training in the school of Moses, by varied rite and symbol, was the world led to the open and full manifestation of the reality which formed the substance of the symbol. The shadow passed away as the full and perfect image, which was shown in Christ, rose upon the world.

Says the writer to the Hebrews, in our text:—"The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect..... Sacrifice and offering he said, and burnt offering and offering for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second."

You will remember, I hope, what this epistle is from which our text is taken. It is a letter written by a Hebrew to Hebrews, in the first age of Christianity, almost eighteen centuries ago. It was written most probably while the temple was yet standing in Jerusalem, and the Jewish ritual still observed. Under these circumstances the writer's thoughts naturally flowed into Jewish moulds of language. The gospel was opposed by its adversaries attached to the Mosaic ritual, as slighting that ritual and destructive thereof. And the writer, to give assurance and courage to the Jewish converts to Christianity, some of whom might be wavering in their profession, proceeds to show that so far from slighting the ceremonial of Ju-

daism, it completely fulfilled it. With this view he presents the sanctuary, the priests, and the sacrifices, to set forth Christ, and as figures to illustrate Christ's mission and work. Had the Jews a tabernacle and sanctuary? So had the Christians: — a "true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man." (viii. 2.) Had the Jews a high priest? So had the Christians: — a "great high-priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." (iv. 14.) — "a high-priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands." (ix. 11.) Had the Jews a sacrifice? So had the Christians. But the Christians' high-priest "needed not daily, as the high-priests of the Jews did, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did once when he offered up himself." (vii. 27.) *He offered up himself.* I ask you to mark this. Here the priest and the sacrifice are identical. This is self-dedication — self-sacrifice. In Christ it was unreserved, complete, perfect. As such it was the consummation of all that was typified and shadowed forth by the former ritual.

For, when we come to reflect upon the matter, what is the fundamental idea involved in all sacrifice? Is it not this — the acknowledgment of God's right and dominion over man, and over all that man possesses, whether of inward faculty or outward thing? In sacrifice, man, by offering a part, sets forth his obligation to God for the whole. In ritual times the extent of the obligation was sometimes forgotten, and the substantial idea lost sight of. Then the rite became a hollow form, and was displeasing to God. The priest might practise his ritual, as he was bound to do, but when he and people alike lost

sight of its inward significance and proper end, the prophet was raised to announce its significance, and proclaim the will of God anew to both priest and people. And I need not remind you with what emphasis and power those old Hebrew prophets spake, in calling the nation back to God, and to obedience to God's will. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" demands Samuel: and his testimony is "Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."—(1 Sam. xv. 22.) "Hear the word of the Lord," cries Isaiah, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord, I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me who hath required this at your hands to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth, they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow," (Is. i. 11—17.) Thus it was, that when, through spiritual blindness, the inward significance and ultimate purpose of the ritual was lost sight of, mercy, and not sacrifice became the emphatic demand — the inward and active

principle of holy obedience, not the outward and dead form of a ritual observance. Man might offer a part of his outward substance as a sacrifice to God, and yet make no soul offering at all — not even the faintest feeling of penitence, the feeblest emotion of gratitude, or the slightest movement of desire toward a thorough and loving obedience. But in such an offering there was no meaning. In such an offering there could be no value.

Take up the fundamental idea just referred to, and trace it to its last result, and what is its legitimate requisition? God's dominion over man is acknowledged. In the ritual sacrifice man offers a part of his outward substance, and of his inward being, in token of his obligation to God. A part, I say, but why only *a part?* Where can he draw the line and say, this is verily God's, and this is not? No such line can be drawn for all is God's, and the ultimate indication, therefore, is, that in a full and true service *all* must be offered to Him. So long as anything is kept back the service is incomplete. Now in view of this may we see how significant the mission of the Lord Jesus was, as fulfilling the former law, and opening a new spiritual economy. Jesus kept nothing back. His offering was complete—being nothing short of himself—heart and soul and mind and strength. The key-note of his advent was "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." His daily meat, as he said, was to do the will of his Father who sent him. To him the universe was an open temple, and every thought, feeling, word and act became consecrate to God. His was a complete self-surrender, and he became the willing and devoted instrument of the Father in his high purposes of love. The great and constant sacrifice

of Christ was brought to a close by his death on Calvary, the blood of which stands as the seal thereof to all people, speaking better things than the blood of Abel, and testifying a love unparallelled and most attractive, — a love sufficient to draw all men unto him. In that death on Calvary we see the grand turning point and link of the two dispensations. In that perfect sacrifice of Christ we see the close of all ritual sacrifice, and the consummation, as I have said, of the complete and proper sacrifice. Now that the proper sacrifice is made manifest, the imperfect symbol is annulled. A new epoch is begun, and as the previous ritual had partially shadowed forth what was fully accomplished in and by Christ; so now does he, the Messiah, become "the very image" and type of the new order of sacrifice required by the new dispensation — a sacrifice wherein nothing can be withheld, but in which *all* must be offered. We only require to look at the Gospel narratives to see how completely our Lord gave up his will, and the strength of his life to God. We see there how he became a living and willing sacrifice, undeterred by the opposition which beset him, or the suffering which stared him in the face. Tempted as we are, yet without sin, he went out day by day and braved the frowns and threats and evil treatment of wicked men in doing his Father's will, and carrying forward his Father's work. And then by night he sought fresh strength amid the stillness of the olive groves in prayer to God. No earthly mind understood him, or appreciated his purpose. In solitary spiritual majesty he moved among men, winning hearts, and conquering the souls who were to be witnesses for him when he should be taken away. Yet his closest friends and dearest dis-

ciples did not discern the actual grandeur of his character. They knew that he loved them, and they loved him in return, but they could not comprehend his full spiritual proportions. No earthly home had he. The foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but he had not where to lay his head. And the hour was coming when his chosen disciples should be scattered every man to his own, leaving him alone, and without a companion on earth to utter a word of sympathy, and yet he could say he was not alone, for the Father was with him. Such was the life of the Lord Christ. No selfishness was in it, nor shadow of self-seeking. A sacrifice it was from its beginning to its close. And when the close came it was sacrifice still. The cross was raised, and he was lifted up thereon. Its agony was borne, for the key-note of his advent still sounded clear and strong through all the chambers of his being: "Lo, I come to do thy will O, God." Amid the tears of Gethsemane in those closing hours of his life we still hear him pray, and say "Father not my will, but thy will be done."

I have now indicated the complete and proper sacrifice as shown forth in and by Christ. And hereby may we see the nature of the sacrifice required of the Christian, as distinguished from that which was required of the Hebrew. If the blood of animals, and the outward offering be no longer demanded at the altar within the temple, it is that soul and body, thought and life be surrendered to the willing service of God in all places. If the Messiah took away the one, it was that he might establish the other. Remember the key-note of his life: "Lo, I come to do thy will O, God." Linked to his Lord by a living tie of love,

gratitude and sympathy, the genuine disciple will find that this key-note is for him likewise. For him too the universe is the temple, and every spot where a Christian man stands is an altar. In view of the clear and close relation which the Christian can see and recognize between himself and his God, this full sacrifice of obedient service is most fit and reasonable. So the Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans confidently writes: "I beseech you brethren by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (xii. 1.)

This, then, is the Christian Sacrifice — the complete dedication of ourselves to God. This is the full service which the former ritual service but faintly and partially prefigured. The Christian man discerns that not only what he has, but likewise what he is, comes from God, and he would consecrate all, in its use and purpose to the Giver. This perfect surrender of self, and thorough devotion of every feeling and faculty to the Highest—this, whether in earth or heaven, is the summit of religious effort, the crowning result of religious aspiration.

Would it not be well for the world if this doctrine of the Christian Sacrifice could be every where presented to men in its simplicity? Christ's mission was a ministry of reconciliation by sacrifice. The sacrifice of a contrite heart, moved by penitence like that of the prodigal in the Lord's parable, we know our Heavenly Father will not despise. In this touching parable the whole method of atonement or reconciliation is revealed. In the light of the better hope brought in by Christ may we see that if we draw nigh to God after the manner of the prodigal's

penitence, and with vital faith in Christ's complete sacrifice — such a faith therein as availeth to mould our lives according to the spirit and pattern of Lord's perfeet life — God will draw nigh to us, and we shall find the joy of the reconciliation. But the theology of the current orthodoxy comes in to perplex men here, and to obscure the simplicity of Christ. It still lingers among Judaic elements, and insists that certain Levitical ideas shall be carried into Christianity. Men's minds are held in bondage thereto, and traditional prejudices block up the way of progress for the pure and simple Gospel. Theology, which is always to be distinguished from religion, is a human science, and is fluctuating in its character, not fixed. The student of theological opinion, as he traces its past history, can recognise and distinctly mark the various epochs of its development, just as the student of geology can mark the various epochs of the earth's formation. In the early ages of the church it was a prevalent opinion of theologians that the devil had a right over men, and that Christ gave up his life as a ransom to him, so that men might be made free of the devil's claim and dominion. Thus argues Irenœus in the second century: "A ransom," he says, "is paid to deliver captives from the hands of their enemies. But if Christ gave his life a ransom for us, to whom did he give it? It must have been to an enemy who held us captive. And who could this be except the devil." This view, absurd as it may now appear to us, could be maintained by a partial and literal interpretation of certain texts of Scripture. In the lapse of time this theory lost its hold, and other opinions became from time to time the prevalent and popular ones. Calvin in the sixteenth century

wrote, in his Institutes of the Christian Religion,* that Christ was appointed ... with his sacrifice to appease the wrath of God."...." This is our acquittal," he says, " that the guiltiness which made us subject to punishment, is removed upon the head of the Son of God. For this setting of one against the other, we ought principally to hold fast, lest we tremble and be careful all our life long, as though the just vengeance of God did hang over us, which the Son of God hath taken upon himself." This is the doctrine of vicarious atonement, or sacrifice of substitution, which may be regarded as the conventional orthodoxy of our day. By far the most popular preacher of Great Britain reiterates the Calvinistic dogma, and proclaims that the Gospel is, in one word, Substitution. A leading divine† of the metropolis of New England, in a sermon recently published, declares that " sin can be forgiven only by faith in Jesus Christ, who, by his sufferings and death, is a substitute for the sinner, and constitutes for him a righteousness which takes away his condemnation, and prepares for his sanctification and salvation." These are the utterances of current Protestant orthodoxy, and they indicate the stage of development which its theology has reached. It is not allowed to rest here, however, for among the ablest opponents of this theory of substitution and vicarious atonement, are now to be found men in connection with churches which still acknowledge the traditional orthodox creeds. Never before were these creeds subjected to so severe a test as they are just now, in the rising and agitated tide of human thought. They are strained and straining at

* Book II., Ch. xvi. xvii.

† Dr. N. Adams of Boston, in Discourse on Endless Punishment.

every point, like the worn-out ship when the swell of the ocean heaves her to and fro, and the strong gales of the Atlantic press upon every spar. It is not to be denied that this theory of Calvin, like that of Irenœus in the second century, may be maintained by a partial and literal interpretation of certain passages of Scripture. But the literal interpretation of the figurative language in the Bible must, in the course of time, and in the light of clearer knowledge, be abandoned, and an interpretation given and acknowledged, which will harmonize with the general scope of the sacred records, and with the admitted attributes of God. We are of those who look forward with perfect confidence to that coming time of clearer light, when the obscurities and perplexities which human speculation has thrown around this doctrine of the Christian Sacrifice will be dispelled, and the doctrine itself stand forth in its simplicity and comprehensiveness, its spiritual depth and grandeur, and full practical power.

The conventional orthodoxy, resting in its vicarious element, does not come up to the proper Christian idea of sacrifice. But we must not halt with orthodoxy at this, its lower level, as if there were nothing higher to be attained. We shall surely perplex ourselves, and run risk of the worst errors of the worst outward ritualism of former times if we suffer ourselves to rest in any thought or belief which throws the slightest tinge of ill-will into our conception of the great and loving God. He is verily a just God, but his love keeps constant march with his justice. Christ is a loving Saviour, but in his perfect character, justice also asserts its claim step by step with the claims of love. Most perplexing and perilous will it be for us if we rest in any thought which relaxes the strict-

ness of individual responsibility in the matter of sin and righteousness, by any dogmatic representations of the arbitrary transfer of one or other — of sin to the righteous or of righteousness to the sinner. Most perplexing and perilous will it be for us if we allow ourselves to believe that Christ had any measure of love for us which the Father had not, or that any throb of forgiving pity toward men was felt by him which was not felt in all its fulness by the gracious and almighty God himself. God and Christ — the Father and the Son — are in strict harmony at every point in the work of elevating and saving men, redeeming them from sin, and leading them to righteousness. God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and if we follow Christ in the spirit of his perfect sacrifice — surrendering ourselves to the willing service of God — Christ will be in us the hope of glory. "I and my Father are one" said Jesus. They are in close and constant union. The will of the Father is still the will of the faithful and devoted Son. And the prayer of Jesus is that all his disciples may be lifted through the power of spiritual sympathy into the same blessed union, and held there by the bond of a willing obedience. I pray, saith he, "that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." All self-will and opposing will annihilated, and the will of God reigning supreme in every intelligent soul— this is the consummation which the Gospel proposes to effect. To this end the Lord instructs his disciples to pray in their daily prayer that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The spring of the highest life in man — the life which comes from perfect surrender of self-will to the will of

God — is the appreciation and appropriation of the sacrifice of Christ, *i.e.*, of the spirit which led to that sacrifice. As a manifestation of love it appeals to the affections, and enlists this strongest part of our nature on the side of God. All other priests and high priests had offered a part. Jesus the true high priest of the new dispensation offered the whole — even himself. He is "the very image" and full representation of that of which the law was but "a shadow." He is the perfect type of that complete sacrifice of which the law was the imperfect one. Thus does he open up a new and living way wherein all men are called to become priests unto God, and offer unto him the sacrifice of a consecrated heart and life. In a word, according to the Christian idea, each man is to offer up himself as a "living sacrifice."

According to this view of the Christian Sacrifice you will at once observe how vast must be the sweep of its application. Looking at the matter, however, as it is commonly apprehended we find two differing methods adopted, which we may characterize respectively as the contemplative and the active.

In the former, *i. e.*, in the contemplative method, the Christian, to the end that he may present himself a living sacrifice unto God, withdraws from the sphere of active life among men. His leading idea in doing so is one which existed before Christianity, and had its origin in the ancient notion of an essential antagonism between spirit and matter, and between God and the common world of men and things. Hence he is led to separate himself, and devote himself wholly to devout meditation.

Multitudes of most earnest souls have thus devoted themselves. Freely giving up all the advantages and enjoyments of social life, they have sought solitude in order to offer themselves more completely to God. Here they sought and found their highest luxury in contemplation and prayer. Recognizing God as the fountain of all being, and the Lord of all that exists, they have made free-will offering to Him of all thought and feeling, and so far as human effort could reach they have striven to merge themselves in the Infinite.

Let us do justice to the contemplative method, and confess the devoted piety which it has cherished and perfected. In cell and in cloister has it kept its patient and joyful vigils. Narrowing the wants of the body within the smallest possible limits it has bestowed all thought upon the soul. Rigidly has it scrutinized the soul, deep has been its penitence and high its aspiration. No delight has it sought in earthly things, lest heaven should lose thereby somewhat of its rightful due. It has tortured the flesh so that it might tame it, and subdue it utterly. And this, to the end that the soul should be more free to give itself up to the service and glory of God.

In what I have called the active method, the Christian makes no such withdrawal of himself from social life. He participates in the ordinary activities of the world, and aims to serve God likewise. And here, again, in this sphere of active service are we compelled to make a distinction between those who give the living sacrifice of the Christian a limited, and those who give it a comprehensive, interpretation. There are two differing types of religion affirmed and set forth by professing Christians

in the sphere of active service. The one covers only a part of life, its relations and activities. The other covers the whole. According to the former the sphere of religion is sharply defined and set apart from what is merely secular. Whatever has immediate and visible connection with the outward institutions of religion is regarded as religious. Whatever has not is looked upon as merely secular. According to this idea a man is religious, and fulfils the requisite conditions of the Christian Sacrifice, when he is mindful of specific offices of devotion, and gives himself to the support and furtherance of what are called religious institutions. If he is punctual in the rites and ordinances, and supports the cherished schemes of his sect, he thinks he fulfils the acceptable service. This type of religion produces as its quite common fruit a character not entirely reliable in the affairs of ordinary life. For having monopolized sanctity within what is called the religious sphere there is none left for the sphere merely secular. The man may pray in the church, and contribute quite regularly to missions abroad and at home, but in common social intercourse, and matters of trade and business, strict truth and justice may not always be sure of respect, if they are found to stand in the way of convenience or profit. In such a person there is an obvious lack of that beautiful wholeness and harmony properly termed integrity of character. Indeed some have gone so far as to say that when religion of this stamp is seen in the market or exchange it is apt to make honest men suspicious.

For this type of religion I have but little respect — far less than for the contemplative. I consider both defective, and must go for the most satisfactory form of religion

and for the full significance of the Christian's living sacrifice to that interpretation of it which is comprehensive, covering the whole of life in all its relations and activities.

It is through this interpretation only that we can discover and appreciate the full and far reaching meaning of the Lord Christ's sacrifice, which was not an offering of anything outward or apart from himself, but actually himself— his soul and all his powers to an active conformity to the will of God. And it is through this interpretation, too, that we reach the proper significance of the Apostle Paul's entreaty when he beseeches Christians "by the mercies of God that they present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is their reasonable service." For the Christian soul must feel that all it has, and all that it is, is of God's mercy. And the Christian ought to feel and know, moreover, that a sanctity belongs to all that God has created and ordained. Christ has appeared, and removed the veil of separation which stood between man and his God. Now by him, as by the new and living way have we access to the Father. Separate from God, and in fear, man once stood. But Christ came, and by the sacrifice of himself— in his life and his death — reconciled man to God, and sowed the seed of love which was to germinate and abound to the perfect casting out of fear. Christ shows us the Father. He shows us the Father waiting and merciful — waiting for the offering we bring, and merciful in all his regards.

The offering which constitutes the proper Christian Sacrifice must be complete. As I have already said, all

that we have, and all that we are, is God's — every outward possession, every inward faculty. All that we see is God's — all that we see in the heavens above and the earth beneath. There is a sanctity all around us, and connected with our personal being. We can no longer rule off any part, and mark it common and unclean. Let our church here be sacred, and it must be so if we are faithful to the holy purpose of its erection. For these walls have been raised to shelter us while we meet to meditate on things divine, and lift up our common prayers to God. And to this purpose let this house now and henceforth stand dedicated. Raised, as it partly is, on the foundations of a former structure built for the same purpose, let this our second temple be dedicated, as the first was, "to religion and its uses — to the worship and glory of the one living and true God. To Christianity and its influences we dedicate it — to the exposition and enforcement of that Gospel which is the rule of life and charter of salvation. To the well being of man we dedicate it — in his preparation for the duties of this life and the enjoyment of the life to come. To truth and love and peace we dedicate it, and invite them to dwell within its walls as the guardians of its sanctity. To holy prayer we dedicate it; to religious instruction we dedicate it; to sacred song we dedicate it."* But while we thus set it apart as a holy place and place of prayer, let not the shop and the counting house, the market and the exchange be places unsanctified as if God looked for no offering, or sought no service there. Rather let our service here still remind us that wherever a Christian man

* From Dr. Gannett's Sermon at Dedication of Montreal Unitarian Church — A.D. 1845.

moves there does God demand the living Christian Sacrifice.

O, the height and the depth, the length and the breadth of this Christian obligation! How it follows a man every step he takes, reminding him whose he is, and what is the proper purpose of his life. Does he plough the field or fell the tree? Behold it is divine work — let him look to it that his muscles are faithful in their offering. Does he go to the couch of disease with his healing skill, or into a court of justice to plead a client's cause? Behold here, too, the work is divine — let the conscience be awake, and the service rendered as unto God. Does he stand in mart or store amid the din of buying and selling? Behold here, again, is a place sanctified by the divine presence — let nothing fraudulent or unjust be permitted to enter — let every act of trade be an offering of conscience to the Lord. The spirit in which our work is rendered gives it its character in the sight of the Highest. This, as George Herbert writes, may

> "Make drudgery divine;
> Who sweeps a room, as for God's laws
> Makes that, and th' action fine."

This, my friends, is the call of the Gospel — the demand of Christianity. Nothing short of this can fulfil the living sacrifice there required. We must regard life's work as God's work, and whatever we cannot harmonize with his truth, justice, holiness and love — that we must shun and put far away. We must decline act or part therein, else we divide the service of our hearts and vitiate the sacrifice of our lives. I need not speak here of the more obvious demands of Christian love upon us

to help the helpless and the weak — to befriend the friendless and the erring. For all this will be seen, and more too — yea, far more than I have indicated — when the soul comes to submit itself meekly to God, and accept his will as the joyful law of its life. When self is crucified within, and all the poor and transient vanities which cluster around it are cast out, then will the holy spirit enter to put the seal upon our sacrifice, and confirm us as co-workers with God and all godlike spirits in the universe. Then shall we feel ourselves free of the limitations of time and place, members of the church universal, citizens of the kingdom which is eternal. Then, as we render our worship, shall we be "built up a spiritual house," as the apostle saith, —"a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."